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ABSTRACT

Harry S. Truman envisioned the community college as an institution that should reach into every community in America, not just in terms of providing the first two years of a baccalaureate education, but also of providing postsecondary vocational technical education. The community college, Truman believed, should also provide an acceptable re-entry for people who had dropped out of school, along with a personal enrichment component. As community colleges establish themselves, they must maintain a blend of access and quality. The companionship between access and quality can be characterized by four "Rs"--recruitment, retention, role modeling, and recognition. Colleges that are serious about recruitment must link access, the quality of education, and the hope for a better quality of life. The quality of an education lies not just in the mastery of technical skills but in the enhancement of self-image. Improving retention involves financial aid, counseling and remediation, peer tutoring, and a good image of the college. Role modeling comes into play when community colleges stress the value and meaning of education; students need to see someone in the classroom, in the administration, and in the college governance structure that looks like them, in terms of their culture, their positive value system, and their racial and ethnic heritage. Recognition of outstanding examples of community colleges throughout the nation is necessary to enhance the image of the community college. Institutional success, as opposed to student success, can be assisted through four "Cs"--communication, cooperation, coordination of effort, and commitment. (JMC)

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THE THIRD ANNUAL
HARRY S. TRUMAN LECTURE

ACCESS
—PLUS—
QUALITY

THE FORMULA FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

BY WILHELMINA DELCO

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Wilhelmina Ruth Fitzgerald Delco is one of America's outstanding legislative leaders in the field of higher education. As chair of the State of Texas House of Representatives Higher Education Committee for the past eight years, she has shaped landmark legislative initiatives that have aimed to improve both access and quality in higher education. Her reputation as a keen and innovative thinker and policy leader has spread well beyond the Texas borders. Rep. Delco serves on AACJC's Commission on the Future of Community Colleges as well as other critical national panels and boards of directors including the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching Governance Panel. Formerly, she has served as chair of the Board of the Educational Testing Service, vice chair of the Education Commission of the States' Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, and vice chair of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators. She is a life member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. She is a graduate of Fisk University, where she earned a bachelor of arts degree in sociology.

On February 1, 1988, she delivered the Third Annual Harry S. Truman Lecture in Washington, DC, to kick off National Community College Month.

I have often thought that if the community college had not existed, we would have had to invent it. It is one of those unique American institutions that translates well and transports well, because of all it tries to do.

When President Harry S. Truman envisioned the community college, which was an outgrowth of the old junior college concept, he thought about how America would recover from the devastation of the Second World War. He knew that many people were returning to the country with a new image of themselves and their role in the greater society that we call America. There was a song in the First World War that went, "How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm/after they've seen Paree?" I suspect that what President Truman was thinking was, "How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm after they've really seen the farm?" In a country that was concerned about maximizing the potential and the contributions of all its citizens, people who were looking for a better quality of life had to find a vehicle for doing that.

In the Truman Commission report, the president said, "As one means of achieving the expansion of educational opportunity and the diversification of educational offerings it considers necessary, this commission recommends that the number of community colleges be increased and that the activities be multiplied." The Truman Commission report then goes on to spell out specific things that ought to be done, ending with, "whatever form the community college takes, its purpose is educational service to the entire community, and this purpose requires of it a variety of functions and programs. It will provide college education for the youth of the community, certainly, so as to remove geographic and economic barriers to educational opportunity and discover and develop individual talent at low cost and easy access. But in addition, the community college will serve as an active center of adult education. It will attempt to meet the total post-high school needs of its community. The potential effects of the community college in keeping intellectual curiosity alive in out-of-school citizens, of stimulating their zest for learning, of improving the quality of their lives as

individuals and as citizens are limited only by the vision, the energy, and the ingenuity of the college staff," and, Truman added, in typical political fashion, "by the size of the college budget."

There are a lot of people who will dwell on that "size of the college budget." In December 1947, when the commission report was issued, that budget was a truly significant factor, because community colleges in their new role as public entities indeed had to depend upon public support. But think back to 1947 and what community Harry S. Truman and his commission were addressing. They were talking about an America that was essentially perceived as white male, emerging from a rural to an urban society, and moving from an agricultural economy to a manufacturing and industrial economy that demanded more education.

Surely when we think of the role and the mission of community colleges then, it must have seemed so easy. Today, those who make up the biggest components of community colleges are very different. With a student body that is 41 percent black, 53 percent Hispanic, over 50 percent female, average age 27, and the majority part-time, you've got to wonder if this is really what Harry S. Truman had in mind. And therein lies the real challenge of community colleges.

Through the years when we talk about community colleges, a lot of the conversation and a lot of the requests to legislative appropriations committees and to the Congress have centered around how we make this establishment more respectable, more viable, more effective. The real truth is that none of those things can happen unless we first define *community* and we secondly define *student*.

When Harry S. Truman talked about the community college, he said that it was an institution that should reach into every community in America, not just in terms of providing the first two years of a baccalaureate education, but also in providing postsecondary vocational technical education. The community college, Truman believed, should also provide an acceptable re-entry for people who had dropped out of school; therefore adult basic education has become an important component of community colleges. And finally, and not least of course, was what we jokingly called, in founding Austin Community College, a program of busy work for bored housewives. By this I'm talking about the personal enrichment component of community colleges for people who really aren't after

certification or degrees but just want to go back to school and do something that they've always wanted to do, whether that is in the context of their personal lives or in the context of their professional advancement. All of these components make up the community college. The community college is charged to reach in some way into every home in every community.

As they try to establish themselves, community colleges are always asked two critical questions: Is there a question of access and is there a question of quality? Access without quality is perpetrating a fraud, and quality without access is elitism. The community college seems to be the perfect place to blend the two. The problem is how to really achieve that blend. The companionship between access and quality can be characterized by four "R's"—recruitment, retention, role modeling, and recognition.

Boasting of the fact that community colleges have open admission policies has come to be like the fine print on the bottom of most company stationery that says, "We are an equal opportunity employer." It's down there, and you can't really say they don't have it because it's right there on the stationery, but it really doesn't mean a whole lot. Why not? Because in the communities whose citizens are already college-bound, that the community colleges are reaching out now to attract—recruit, if you will, we're already dealing with the young people and the middle-aged people and, in fact, the older people who are already motivated.

And yet our challenge goes deeper than that. Our challenge extends to those people who do not identify with community colleges but whom this country urgently needs in order to move to the future. These include the young people who are having babies and those horrible drop-out statistics, which in my community approximate 35 percent of the population and in a lot of instances, the minority population. How do you recruit that core of students? That is the challenge of community colleges. More emphasis is placed on urban than inner-city locations.

It's not enough to say we're open admissions. It's much more important to say that we have something in our institution that can and ought to be of meaning and value to that at-risk population. Community colleges must do more than simply provide early detection, counseling, and support services. Community colleges have to strengthen their financial aid programs. And while the idea of

diagnostic tests for remediation and help instead of punishment are important facets, I believe that if we're really serious about this whole question of access, then we have got to couple it, even in recruitment, with quality. If we're going to sell community colleges on the basis of the fact that they are a road to a better job and therefore a road to a bigger salary, that's not going to sit too well with the youngster who looks up to the pimp. You will never make as much money going to a community college as you can pushing flesh or pushing drugs. We don't need to deceive ourselves with that notion. What community colleges must do if they're going to be serious about recruitment is to include in that question of access the one of the quality of education and the hope for a better quality of life.

That brings into consideration another important concept that the Futures Commission and others are certainly wrestling with: the concept of liberal versus specialized education. It seems important that in this discussion of quality and access we talk about the quality of access not just in terms of skills, but in terms of the development of the self-image of students. We must say to individuals that if you come to our institution, we will offer a broad base of knowledge that will enhance you as an individual. We must stress not just the writings of Shakespeare and Chaucer, but for black people the writings of W.E.B. DuBois and Lorraine Hansberry; not just the music of Beethoven, but the validity of the music of New Orleans jazz and Stevie Wonder; not just the concept of what a global community ought to look like through the eyes of European history, but through the eyes of African history. Community colleges have a role to play in saying that the quality of your education is not just in the mastery of technical skills but also in the enhancement of your image of yourself. You not only can earn a better living, but you can be a proud, productive member of our society. That seems to me to be the challenge of recruitment.

But getting the youngsters, or middle-aged people, there by whatever means is not enough. The second big step has to be retention. The answer to retention from the access side of the question is clearly financial aid. It's clearly counseling and remediation. It's clearly peer tutoring and telling students that if it was important enough to bring them here, it's also important enough to keep them here.

And where is here? Should a community college have the responsibility of being accessible to the bus lines, to the subway stations? Should a community college recognize that the best way to make a teenage mother productive is to provide quality child care while she goes back to school? Should a community college consider that there are flexible times to offer the curriculum that is considered important? Can we, by saying that we are now community-service based organizations, reach out into the community and work with those people who want to participate in this enterprise we call community colleges? Retention means keeping people in the mode and mood of education for the rest of their lives. The people going to school now are probably going to be in some form of education for the rest of their lives. The community college is the vehicle most suited to meet most of their needs. We need to let our young people know that the community college is like that armed forces commercial that says, "We're a great place to start."

Our message obviously has been gotten across because more than half of the freshmen and sophomore students in postsecondary education are in fact in community colleges. That's the good news. The bad news is that, although community college students are 41 percent black, 53 percent Hispanic, and 33 percent white, the statistics still show that those 33 percent white students finish at a higher percentage than the other two larger groups of minority students. To your credit, you in community colleges are now looking at that disparity and making an effort to do something about it.

The third aspect of the companionship between access and quality is one of role modeling. If we're saying education is of meaning and value, then students need to see somebody in that classroom, in that administration, and in that governance structure that looks like them. If you say I would make a good teacher, then I need to see someone who looks like me who is a good teacher.

There was an interesting study done quite a while ago in rural Georgia. A professor at Georgia State had a theory that students only aspire to what they see. He asked a group of eighth grade students what they wanted to be when they grew up. Most of the students said teachers, preachers, and farmers, because that's what they saw. Yet there was this one little boy who blew the whole curve when he said, "I want to be a banker." The researcher was so intrigued

with this one answer that seemed so out of keeping with all of the other responses that he asked the teacher, "Who is this little boy?" The teacher's response was, "Oh, he's here spending this year with his grandmother, but he's from Atlanta," and, of course, there is a black bank in Atlanta. The theory held. If we're serious about providing quality and telling students that the educational enterprise is an endeavor in which they should participate, we need to make sure that as those students walk down those halls and across those campuses, they see someone who looks like them. We need to make sure they see their culture, their positive value system, their racial and ethnic heritage reflected in the literature they study.

The last link between access and quality is recognition. All too often we know that there are indeed outstanding examples of community colleges all across this nation, but it distresses me that you'd have to come to a specific targeted press conference in Washington, such as the AACJC Urban Commission's press conference February 1, to find out about them. I would submit that there ought to be some vehicle, comparable to the Truman Lecture or the month of February, that would recognize outstanding teachers and outstanding institutions and outstanding supporters of community and junior colleges. There should be some conscious effort made to say that these are the people who are doing this thing right.

After we say that through recruitment and retention and role modeling and recognition we assure student success or access, how do we assure institutional success and access? Since I used four "R's" to talk about the students, I will use four "C's" to talk about the institution.

The first "C" is communication. Networking is tremendously important in community colleges. I serve in the legislature that rotates every two years, and I'm amazed by the number of members in the state legislatures, not to mention the Congress, whose eyes literally glaze over when they're asked to define or describe community colleges. There's a kind of blurring there, and it is because there has been no conscious effort made to ensure that they understand what this enterprise is all about. Oh, sure, they might go out to the campus for a luncheon or the dedication of a new building or the installation of the new president, but do they really understand what community colleges are trying to do? How many community colleges are out there striving with all sorts of excitement

to create a program that has already failed in the next state? How effectively do community colleges share information with the spectrum of people that they assume would be interested?

The second "C" is cooperation. Harold Hodgkinson probably put it better than anyone else when he said that "Education should be a continuum." It is disgraceful that each component of education in this country acts as if it were existing in splendid isolation. Community colleges cannot be in competition with other forms of education. Today we seem to blame the people we get on the public schools, and we blame what happens to them once they transfer to senior institutions. The time has come for cooperation, for the community colleges to sit down with the other components in this enterprise that we call education and work together to assure student success. We have tried to say, without mandating it, that articulation is very important. It is so important, in fact, that on the competency tests that we are now requiring, the results must be reported back to the sending institution. You see, I don't believe that if 60 percent of the youngsters from a given high school fail the math portion of that test, that you can identify each one of those youngsters and say, "This is your fault because you didn't study hard enough, or you didn't take your education seriously enough." For 60 percent, 50 percent, 40 percent, and maybe even 30 percent, we ought to inform the high school that there is something that they are not teaching in their math program that is important to their students as they try to seek the next level of education.

The charge is often levied at community colleges that our transfer rates are not very good, that people who take their first and second years at a community college cannot enter the third year at a major senior institution and start as a junior. That is disgraceful. Some of the freshman and sophomore courses in community colleges are vastly superior to those same courses in senior institutions, but the perception is that they are not. The perception is that somehow community colleges are better than high school, but not much, and that they are vastly inferior to senior colleges. The concern is often expressed that if a high school counselor has the prerogative of recommending a school to a bright student, the counselor will recommend that it is better for the student to go to any four-year college than to a community college—that perception needs to be changed.

The third "C" is coordination of effort. In my state, we are trying to recover from an oil and gas crisis that still has us reeling, mainly because we depended disproportionately on oil and gas as a source of state revenue. We have found that the most effective way for us to recover is through the coordination of efforts by business, government, and education. I would submit that this is the prescription for economic success for our country in the future, and there is no better example of how that works than in the community colleges. Most of your institutions have advisory business committees and work with elected officials. If you haven't attempted a coordinated effort, the push toward a meaningful, long-lasting alliance and partnership ought to be at the top of your agenda. It's not good to lambast members of Congress for what they are doing if you haven't told them what you think they should be doing in your community. If you have not communicated with the business leaders, and if you have not communicated with your state legislators, then there is no way that you can develop a partnership that says, in effect, "we're all in this together."

But even with communication and cooperation and coordination and all of those implied external forces that we could bring together in community colleges to ensure the success of our students, if we within the ranks of community colleges do not seriously and honestly have commitment, it is all for naught. Commitment has to be the key. You know as well as I do about the people that some community colleges have on faculty, who work at a community college and mumble about it and work one or two hours at the university and identify with it. We know that community colleges don't have alumni associations, and I think you're missing a sure lobbying bet, because that's what is sustaining a lot of four-year institutions. The commitment of your faculty, of your governance structure, of your administration, and of your students to the concepts and ideals of community colleges is where the community comes together. This is where the future of higher education is in this country.

Harry Truman felt that the community college was indeed the entity of the future. He said that in 1947. It is just as true in 1988. It is true because the teenage population and working mothers, as a segment of the population, are both growing by leaps and bounds, and the only education with which they truly will identify, and in

a lot of cases can afford, will be the one that is on the bus route, that can hold classes when they can be there, and that can provide child care while they're there. In order for all of our citizens—young and old, black and white and brown and red and yellow and any other shade we contrive—to support this endeavor that is so critically important, they've got to feel that it is a part of their community, a part of their life, and a hope for a better future.

I'd like to close with a comment from the Truman Commission study. "Higher education faces no greater challenge than that of securing, and securing in time, a widespread recognition of, and adjustment to, the oneness of the modern world. A strong and dynamic national community intertwining in harmony and unity of purpose an infinite variety of individual talents and careers, embracing in brotherhood and mutual respect a rich and enriching diversity of national cultures. These are the twin goals for which America and, therefore, its institutions of higher education, must strive to attain. . . . To preserve our democracy and provide for our children a future characterized by the Latin words imprinted on the dollars that we all so vigorously pursue, *E Pluribus Unum*—from many persons one nation, and from many peoples one world indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." And, I would like to add, with educational opportunity for all.

AACJC would like to thank the following corporate and association friends for their generous support of the Harry S. Truman Lecture and National Community College Month.

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1988 AACJC MISSION STATEMENT

The focus of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges is to exert national leadership in support of community, technical, and junior colleges and help member institutions make excellence a standard of service. Success of the Association will be measured through its ability to promote public recognition, act as an advocate, develop linkages, and serve as a resource in helping member institutions provide higher education opportunity with excellence.

We believe the following set of principles must guide the work of the Association:

- AACJC, and the colleges the Association represents, seek to identify with and serve the broad public interest through providing student access to excellent higher education programs. A primary function of AACJC is to help decipher that broad public interest, and then help colleges respond to the demands of that public interest and consequent development of public policies.
- AACJC is an important national vehicle for improving and enhancing the environment within which community, technical, and junior colleges must work. This means developing an environment where these colleges are understood, appreciated, and appropriately funded. It means more than just working with federal government decisionmakers. Linkages should be established, partnerships formulated, and networks developed. Greatly increased communications should be developed with governors, mayors, city managers, school superintendents, high school principals, university leaders, business, industry, labor leaders, and particularly other state and national special-interest associations.
- The community, technical, and junior college voice is stronger and more effective by building and supporting a dynamic national association of colleges. The strength of advocacy and leadership depends on the ability to develop national consensus on key issues. Unity comes not because college leaders are required to surrender individual autonomy, but because they choose to work together. They choose to build strength out of diversity. Improved public recognition and perception of community colleges as colleges of excellence is better achieved with a strong and unified national advocacy voice.

- AACJC is responsible to a broad range of individual member college needs. Buttressed by a general feeling of mutual respect, there is among member colleges a sensitivity to each other's different needs. Interaction among key executives and communication on trends, concerns, and exemplary practices are essential to aid local and state decisionmakers.
- Community, technical, and junior college leaders increasingly are taking their place alongside other local, state, and national education leaders and opinion makers. The Association provides programs for leadership and staff development opportunities for a new and changing generation of educational leaders. Interaction is achieved by broad participation in the work of the Association, and through the positive attitudes that key leaders bring to the academy, commissions, councils, and conventions in a broad and diverse consensus-building process.
- AACJC promotes the concept of access to postsecondary education as fundamental to the mission of community, technical, and junior colleges, and critical to the development of America's human resources. The Association will work with federal and state officials to strengthen student financial aid programs, lower tuition costs, increase support for developmental education programs, and generate strategies to recognize the various educational needs represented in our multicultural nation.
- AACJC provides leadership in defining, sustaining, and promoting educational excellence among member institutions. Toward that end, the Association provides leadership in educational research, as well as in the promotion of Associate Degree programs.
- AACJC assists member institutions in curriculum development as an ongoing concern. The Association encourages linkages among groups representing various subject-matter disciplines, stresses the importance of strengthened basic skills requirements, works at encouraging cooperation among the liberal, fine, and practical arts, and helps strengthen adult and continuing education programs.

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